ROADMAPS
FOR ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY

**DEVELOPED BY PARTICIPANTS
AT THE
BUSINESS DIALOGUE ON
ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT**

PREPARED BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ROADMAPS
FOR ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES THROUGH ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY**

1. Designation of authority—centralized responsibility and source of information.
2. Affinity group.
3. Informal network of employees impacted by disability.
4. Team approach.
5. Professional development.
6. Centralized accommodation (including assistive technology) strategies.
7. Strategic partnerships.
8. Accountability mechanisms.

1. Respond to the market.
2. Balance realities.
3. Reflect business perspective.
4. Appreciate that the messenger is often as important as the message.
5. Bridge the networking gap.
6. Bridge the knowledge gap.
7. Facilitate modeling.
8. Receive usable information from official sources.
9. Receive practical information.
10. Ensure a safe environment.
11. Secure meaningful data.
12. Recognize exemplary efforts.
13. Accommodate varying needs of businesses based on size and sophistication.

1. Support forums and other opportunities to spread the word with generic business organizations and associations.
2. Support business organizations and associations whose mission includes enhancing employment of persons with disabilities.
3. Support establishment of a network of disability and accessibility managers working for businesses.
4. Support the establishment of a network of professionals with disabilities.
5. Promote new careers.
6. Promote disability policies.

7. Promote organizations that establish accessibility standards.
8. Promote disability studies programs.
9. Adopt pledges and pacts by and among businesses.
10. Encourage business foundations to support business initiatives.

1. Convene a leadership summit on enhancing profits and worker productivity through accessible technology.
2. Support business organizations and associations
   - Generic business organizations and associations, and
   - Disability-focused business organizations and associations.
3. Support peer (business-to-business) technical assistance.
4. Support employers' speakers' bureaus.
5. Support the establishment of a network of disability specialists and managers and a network of workers with disabilities using accessible technology.
6. Support efforts to educate and empower youth.
7. Allow for the development of employment plans by public agencies.
8. Expand role of higher education.
9. Support initiatives for entrepreneurs, especially entrepreneurs with disabilities.
10. Enhance role of business community in advising government agencies and government-supported organizations by establishing business advisory councils.
11. Enter into additional strategic alliances.
12. Research and modify employer incentives and supports, including tax incentives.
13. Adopt investment tax credit policy.
14. Eliminate work disincentives in the SSI and SSDI programs.
15. Implement existing disability-related laws.
16. Expand research initiatives.
17. Expand awards and recognition programs.
18. Coordinate government initiatives.
19. Enter into partnerships with foundations.

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OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

On September 24, 2007, a **Business Dialogue on Accessible Technology and Disability Employment** was held in Orlando, Florida. The Business Dialogue was sponsored by the Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA)[1] and the US Business Leadership Network (USBLN)[2] with the participation of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education.

Participants at the Business Dialogue included business leaders across a wide range of companies in size—from Fortune 500 to small family-owned businesses. Industry sectors represented included assistive technology, banking, computer services, consulting services, financial services, hospitality and entertainment, insurance, medical, pharmaceutical, retail, technology, and venture capital. Also in attendance were representatives from key government agencies, including the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, and the General Services Administration and support staff from ATIA and USBLN.[3]

The purpose of the Business Dialogue was to provide cutting-edge business leaders and decision-makers with the opportunity to identify the needs of businesses and then develop consensus Roadmaps to enhance the hiring, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities and others through accessible technology.[4] The Roadmaps affirm current successful business policies and practices and identify new strategic policies and practices. The

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[1] The Assistive Technology Industry Association (ATIA) serves as the collective voice of the Assistive Technology industry so that the best products and services are delivered to people with disabilities. ATIA represents the interests of its members to business, government, education, and the many agencies that serve people with disabilities.

[2] The US Business Leadership Network (USBLN) is the national business organization representing BLN chapters in 32 states and more then 5000 employers using a "business to business" strategy to promote the business imperative of including people with disabilities in the workforce. BLN chapters are led by employers who have discovered the value that individuals with disabilities bring to their workforce and have benefited from including them in their business diversity strategies.

[3] For a list of participants and attendees at the Business Dialogue, see Appendix 1.

[4] For purposes of the Business Dialogue, the term "accessible technology" includes assistive technology devices and technology that encompasses universal design features. The following definitions are set out in Section 3 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended by the Assistive Technology Act of 2004. [See 29 U.S.C. 3002 (4) and (19)]

Roadmap for the business community identifies the actionable steps that can be taken by the business community to facilitate the adoption of these policies and practices by masses of businesses. The Roadmap for the federal government identifies actionable steps that can be taken by the federal government to facilitate implementation of successful policies and practices by masses of businesses. The Roadmaps' official launch date is January 31, 2008 at the ATIA Leadership Forum on Accessibility in Orlando, Florida.

In sum, the Business Dialogue was intended to initiate a process of ongoing interaction and feedback between the business community, the federal government, and other stakeholders rather than a culminating event. It is our hope that the Roadmaps developed by business leaders at the Business Dialogue will stimulate and encourage others to continue the dialogue and establish priorities for taking action to enhance the employment of persons with disabilities through accessible technology.

The report is organized according to the topics that were discussed at the Business Dialogue—

- Successful Business Strategies,
- Identification of Business Needs,
- Roadmap for the Business Community, and
- Roadmap for the Federal Government.

Assistive technology device includes any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capacities of individuals with disabilities.

Universal design means a concept or philosophy for designing and delivering products and services that are usable by people with the widest possible range of functional capacities, which include products and services that are directly accessible (without requiring assistive technologies) and products and services that are interoperable with assistive technologies.

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS STRATEGIES

Successful business strategies that enhance the employment of persons with disabilities through accessible technology are arranged into four topic areas:

- Securing Leadership by Creating a Network of Champions,
- Making the Business Case,
- Adopting Corporate Policies, Practices, and Programs, and
- Implementing Corporate Infrastructures and Organizational Strategies.

I. SECURING LEADERSHIP BY CREATING A NETWORK OF CHAMPIONS

Leadership at the highest level of business is critical to secure "buy-in" and establish and sustain a corporate-wide culture (not limited to human resources) that increases awareness, creates expectations, and enhances commitment to the hiring, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities through accessible technology. The outcome of successful leadership will be a corporate commitment that is pervasive and lasts much longer than the terms of office of one or two corporate leaders that currently support its commitment.

While leadership at the highest levels of a business is necessary to implement and sustain the corporate-wide commitment, it is also critical to recognize that CEOs are policymakers—they are not the policy enforcers, nor are they the people who are doing the work i.e., people exercising day-to-day responsibility for lines of business where hiring and product development occur. There is a need to secure a "network of champions" consisting of corporate policymakers, policy enforcers, and people doing the work (different lines of business).

II. MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE

In making the business case for hiring, retaining, and advancing in employment persons with disabilities, it is important to recognize that every company is different and every CEO within each company is different—every business has a different motivator. Thus, there is a need to provide business leaders and decision makers with different approaches, opportunities, and information to determine what constitutes a compelling business case.

1) Framing the issue.

The market must be the driving force behind initiatives adopted by businesses—people with disabilities, their families, friends and neighbors must demonstrate that they are a market force. In making the business case, the issue should be framed in terms of return on investment, direct and indirect benefits to the company and to all employees in general. The

issue should not be framed only in terms of "impact on persons with disabilities," impact on an individual employee with a disability, or in terms of "compliance" with federal and state laws and regulations.

2) Personalizing the issue.

Business leaders respond to hard facts, but they also need to understand how their decisions impact individual employees. There is a need to personalize the business case i.e., share with business leaders the personal stories within their company describing how persons with disabilities who use accessible technology have benefited the company. To the extent feasible, the individual should tell his or her own story.

3) Redefining what constitutes standard operating procedure/practice.

There is a need to explain and document that adopting corporate policies and practices based on the principles of universal design do not necessarily increase costs and, in many cases may actually lower costs. Redefining what constitutes standard operating procedure may entail educating company personnel about how to do something in a different way.

4) Developing a contemporary talent management strategy.

The business community recognizes that shortage and shrinkage of the talent pool through, for example retirement of baby boomers is a significant threat to competitiveness and business success. People with disabilities remain an untapped labor pool.

5) Recognizing changing demographics of the workforce.

More people will be working with a disability and/or functional impairment e.g., aging/mature population, increased survival rate of premature infants, changing expectations. For many of these individuals, technology is the great equalizer in terms of qualifications and productivity. As the number of persons with disabilities and functional limitations escalates, employers will seek employees who more accurately reflect their customers, many of whom are and will be persons with disabilities.

6) Focusing on accessibility as a differentiator.

Applicants, employees, and customers are increasingly seeking accessible information and communication technology as people age, lose function, and experience disability. Integrating accessibility and universal

design standards into the infrastructure helps position a company by enhancing its reputation as an exemplary employer, exemplary neighbor and business (goodwill), and exemplary company with innovative, accessible solutions. This also helps to expand the scope of talent recruitment (attract talented applicants) and build and increase the customer base. The global economy makes accessibility a higher priority in terms of product design.

7) Improving productivity and reducing costs.

Improved employee productivity and reduced costs will result from making workplace technologies easier to use and more accessible for all, including employees with disabilities, more mature workers experiencing functional limitations, non-English speaking language users, and technology-savvy younger workers who will be more engaged by having added functions.

8) Mitigating legal risk.

The provision of accessible technology both internally (employees) and externally (customers) will mitigate legal risk e.g., lawsuits and negative public relations.

9) Enhancing retention by adopting turnover prevention strategies.

It costs less to accommodate and provide accessible technology to workers who become injured on the job or experience increased limitations as they age than to pay short and long-term disability payouts and/or lose them and require re-training:

- More expensive to lose existing employees (costs to replace lost employees),
- Separation costs,
- Search costs,
- Up-front hiring costs,
- New employee services,
- Lost organizational knowledge,
- Lost productivity,
- Lost goodwill, and
- Lost customer contacts.

10) Responding to public concerns.

The company's standing in the community can be enhanced when it is responsive to issues currently on the public's radar screen e.g., re-integration of Wounded Warriors returning from Iraq.

III. REFINING AND ADVANCING CORPORATE POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS

To enhance the employment of persons with disabilities through accessible technology, it is necessary to refine and advance corporate policies, practices, and programs that define the nature and scope of the commitment.

1) **Vision and mission statements.**

   - The company's vision and mission statements recognize the inclusion of people with disabilities and its commitment to the integration of universal design strategies into every phase of the business, including employment, product design, procurement, and every departmental function e.g., human resources, financial, procurement, education and training, marketing.

   - There is no separate technology or business side of the company; instead there is a unified approach implemented by teams of people who understand both the business and technology perspectives and who use that knowledge to design and implement innovative accessible and usable business solutions.

2) **Overarching plan.**

   The company develops an overarching plan both within the company and through external strategic partnerships that includes identification of champions at all levels of the business, communications strategies, and collaboration with strategic partners.

3) **Diversity program.**

   The company ensures that its diversity program includes a disability component. The program is viewed as bridge between the workplace and the marketplace. The diversity program is "owned" by line managers, and not simply human resources. There are accountability mechanisms in place that include direct reporting to the CEO and Board. The diversity program includes: issuance of equal opportunity and nondiscrimination policies and the establishment of an affirmative action program; requirements that prospective vendors document their employment, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities through adoption and implementation of policies relating to accessible technology; and subcontracting with entrepreneurs with disabilities i.e., entities owned or operated by persons with disabilities.

4) **Corporate procurement policies.**

   The company adopts criteria for the purchase and use of information and communication technology (ICT) by the company that is accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities and others and reflects universal design features i.e., redefine the corporation's standard operating systems.

5) **Recruitment policies and practices.**

   The company uses accessible recruitment practices, including accessible e-recruiting tools.

6) **Internships, mentoring, and shadowing programs.**

   The company provides opportunities for internships, mentoring, and shadowing programs to determine (without fear of litigation if things do not work out) whether there is a good match between the company and the individual.

7) **Retention--disability management and prevention programs.**

   The company adopts disability management and prevention programs that result in workers remaining part of the workforce (retain experienced workers; avoid re-training).

8) **Website accessibility.**

   The company ensures that websites are accessible (internet and intranet).

9) **Product development.**

   The company researches and develops accessible products/universal design (where applicable).

10) **Telecommuting programs.**

   The company enables individuals to work at home or at other remote sites away from the office, such as work on the road or at a telework center.

11) Model for other companies.

The company showcases it operations as a model for other businesses to experience first hand the power of technology to level the playing field and enhance diversity and productivity.

IV. IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE INFRASTRUCTURES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

To realize and sustain the vision and the promises reflected in the policies, practices, and programs described above, it is necessary to establish corporate infrastructures and organizational strategies.

1) Designation of authority—centralized responsibility and source of I information.

The company designates a person, position, and/or unit responsible for ensuring that consistent focus and resources are provided to employees and customers on disability matters, including the development, implementation and evaluation of accessibility and usability (universal design) initiatives. Designation of authority includes empowering individuals with sufficient authority so that they are at the table with other key decision-makers. Designation of authority also includes serving as in-house resource and expert and establishing a line of responsibility and accountability with goals, timetables, and budgets.

2) Affinity group.

The company uses existing employees with disabilities and employees that have family members or friends with disabilities to help identify policies and practices that need to be addressed and expand and improve on how the company can do business with its customers with disabilities, from a disability perspective.

3) Informal network of employees impacted by disability.

The company creates good will and a sense of community among all employees by supporting opportunities for employees to openly discuss disability-related issues. This network enables the company to discover how many employees are parents of children with disabilities, have husbands or wives and brothers and sisters with disabilities.

4) **Team Approach.**

The company formalizes a team approach e.g., an accessibility team comprised of managers across divisions such as human resources, facilities, information and communication technology, procurement, education and training, financial, and marketing. For managers who may not have personal experience interacting with persons with disabilities or persons with particular disabilities, examples are shared within the company regarding how other managers have successfully utilized employees with disabilities (peer advice).

5) **Professional development.**

People don't know what they don't know. The company extends professional development opportunities to all offices, divisions, and departments. The company expands its base of knowledge and experience through various strategies such as training sessions, demonstrations, and newsletters.

6) **Centralized accommodation (including assistive technology) strategies:**

The company:

- Provides for **specialized expertise** to assess and evaluate the need for accessible technology as an accommodation;
- Establishes mechanism for **centralized payment for such accommodations**; and
- Creates an **on-line system for tracking accommodations**, including assistive technology accommodations i.e., documents successful strategies in order to avoid "re-inventing the wheel."

7) **Strategic partnerships.**

The company establishes strategic partnerships with resources in the community to gain insight, information, and expertise, including sources for blending and braiding of funding from existing funding sources, and access to pools of prospective employees. Strategic partnerships include developing relationships with local business associations and organizations; public agencies e.g., vocational rehabilitation agencies, One-Stop Career centers, and MR/DD agencies; community-based organizations; publicly-supported institutions providing training and technical assistance; public school systems; institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges; and private vendors, including ICT vendors.

8) Accountability mechanisms.

The company recognizes that what is measured is what counts. The company establishes accountability mechanisms, such as accessibility checklists, databases and reports, supervisory and managerial performance appraisals, and outcome measures and other definitions of success and uses them.

IDENTIFICATION OF BUSINESS NEEDS

The previous section identified current successful business policies, practices, and organizational infrastructures and strategies that enhance the hiring, retention, and advancement in employment of persons with disabilities through accessible technology. The purpose of this section is to recognize needs that must be addressed if masses of businesses are to successfully implement these policies, practices, infrastructures, and strategies. Specifically, the following needs of businesses must be addressed.

1. **Respond to the market.** The market must be the driving force behind initiatives adopted by businesses. People with disabilities (including youth) and others who may not identify as people with disabilities (mature adults experiencing functional limitations) must demonstrate that they are a market force and business will then appropriately respond.

2. **Balance realities.** Business decisions need to balance realities—compliance with regulations and mandates (fear of litigation), do the right thing (social responsibility), and business case (profits, bottom line, and return on investment).

3. **Reflect the business perspective.** Public and non-profit organizations often do not understand the needs of businesses nor do they speak the language of businesses, e.g., rapid response, market need, and business case.

4. **Appreciate that the messenger is often as important as the message.** Leadership should come from representatives of the business community.

5. **Bridge the networking gap.** Persons with disabilities often do not have social networks or social capital that help them find jobs and businesses often do not have networks that link to the disability community.

6. **Bridge the knowledge gap.** Often business leaders, managers and staff don't know what they don't know. They are faced with the need to understand the nature and extent of legal obligations, ascertaining which standards are applicable, making them relevant to business, and then choosing cost-effective solutions. There are too many separate federal programs and their benefits get lost.

7. **Facilitate modeling.** Businesses want opportunities to learn successful practices from other businesses and then modify their practices to meet the unique culture of their business.

8. **Receive usable information from official sources.** Businesses want information from official governmental sources that is clear, simple, and

consistent i.e., facilitates yet does not impede making decisions regarding the hiring, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities.

9. **Receive practical information.** Businesses need technical expertise to make practical design and procurement decisions.

10. **Ensure a safe environment.** Businesses need to feel comfortable that when they make inquiries, comments, and/or try new approaches that adverse consequences (e.g., litigation, bad press, and loss of proprietary information) will not occur.

11. **Secure meaningful data**. Businesses need particular types of data relevant to making the business case. Companies need financial analysis of the impact of customers with disabilities, the impact of employees with disabilities, and how they impact the bottom line.

12. **Recognize exemplary efforts.** Businesses want to be recognized as exemplary neighbors, businesses, and places to work.

13. **Accommodate varying needs of businesses based on size and sophistication.**

    - Large, medium, and small businesses have differing needs and therefore the solutions may vary e.g., many small businesses do not attend conferences nor can they afford hiring specialists on accessibility; and
    - Companies with limited experience using accessible technology to enhance employment opportunities have needs that differ from companies with more extensive experience.

ROADMAP FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The previous section identified the needs of businesses that must be addressed if businesses are to successfully implement policies, practices, and organizational infrastructures and strategies that will enhance the hiring, retention, and advancement in employment of persons with disabilities through accessible technology. The purpose of this section is to identify actionable steps that can be taken by the business community to facilitate the adoption of these policies, practices, and infrastructures and strategies by masses of businesses.

1. **Support Forums and Other Opportunities to Spread the Word with Generic Business Organizations and Associations.**

   Secure commitments from national organizations and associations of businesses, business professionals, and particular industries to spread the word about hiring persons with disabilities and the efficacy and cost effectiveness of investing in accessible technology (including universal design). Examples of national organizations and associations include Chambers of Commerce at the national, state and local levels; the Better Business Bureaus at the national, state and local levels; The Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Restaurant Association, The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and its local affiliates. Keynote speakers at meetings of these organizations and associations should include CEOs and other high-level leaders from businesses who are willing to include in their speeches examples involving employees with disabilities who use accessible technology.

2. **Support Business Organizations and Associations Whose Mission Includes Enhancing Employment of Persons with Disabilities.**

   a. Develop a communication, messaging, and marketing plan for reaching companies of all sizes about the business case for hiring, retaining, and advancing in employment persons with disabilities through accessible technology. Such a plan should use traditional and new media outlets.
   b. Enter into strategic alliances with federal agencies.
   c. Work with generic business organizations and associations to spread the word.
   d. Work with government agencies and nonprofit organizations to enhance their understanding of and ability to address the needs and perspective of business.
   e. Work with universities, including community colleges to develop courses of study (curriculum) that recognizes the utility of accessible technology and universal design.

f. Offer business-to-business education and technical assistance using business models, including replication and duplication, case histories, and labs and demonstrations at business locations. Models, such as Centers of Excellence, should enable companies to secure necessary information without self-identifying i.e., protect the company's brand and reputation through anonymous website and portal strategies.

g. Conduct research and data collection that supports efforts to make a business case for accessible technology.

h. Disseminate widely to the business community the existence of the GSA database of companies that sell products that comply with the accessibility standards applicable to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The database has a wizard that helps government agencies buy products that meet Section 508 standards.[5]

i. Work with the media and entertainment industry directly or through related organizations to include fair and appropriate depictions of persons with disabilities using accessible technology in the workplace.

j. Establish employers' speakers' bureaus.

k. Investigate the feasibility of establishing the equivalent of the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval or certification for companies that meet specified criteria for purchasing and producing (where applicable) products that are accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities and/or include universal design features. Establish similar recognition for generic business organizations and associations.

3. **Support Establishment of a Network of Disability and Accessibility Managers Working for Businesses.**

Establish and support a network to facilitate communication and information sharing among disability and accessibility managers of corporate disability accessible technology initiatives to learn from each other about how to overcome resistance to change and implement promising business policies and practices.

4. **Support the Establishment of a Network of Professionals with Disabilities.**

Establish and support a network of professionals with disabilities who self-identify as persons with disabilities and are willing to share their experiences, including how they use accessible technology as an equalizer. The network could be virtual e.g., through Facebook, Google Groups, and LinkedIn.

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[5] See http://www.buyaccessible.gov.

5. **Promote New Careers.**

   Promote new careers such as accessibility and disability managers, job coaches as well as technical leadership positions.

6. **Promote Disability Policies.**

   Promote laws such as the ADA, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act (affirmative action), and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act but do so from business perspective such as gaining an economic and/or competitive advantage.

7. **Promote Organizations that Establish Accessibility Standards.**

   Promote organizations such as the Web Accessibility Initiative to continue to develop and publicize standards that aid in universal design.

8. **Promote Disability Studies Programs.**

   Promote components of curriculum of university-based disability studies programs that encourage individuals to become entrepreneurs and business leaders.

9. **Adopt Pledges and Pacts By and Among Businesses.**

   Secure commitments by a group of influential business leaders and/or business organizations and associations to purchase only accessible information and communication technology from third-party vendors. The design of accessible ICT must be the responsibility of the provider of the technology, not the employer or employee. The Pact should use the same general infrastructure and comparable language used by GSA to implement Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. If this is done, companies selling ICT to the federal government will make more of their products universally accessible because now the market for their products will include major purchasers from the private sector, and not just the federal government.

10. **Encourage Business Foundations to Support Initiatives**

    Secure commitments from corporate foundations to support the initiatives described above.

ROADMAP FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Consistent with successful business practices and the needs of and actionable steps that can be taken by the business community to enhance employment of persons with disabilities through accessible technology, this section identifies actionable steps that can be taken by the federal government to facilitate implementation of successful practices by masses of businesses.

1. **Convene a Leadership Summit on Enhancing Profits and Worker Productivity Through Accessible Technology.**

   Leadership at the highest levels of government and business is necessary to enhance awareness and knowledge regarding the business case for designing and procuring accessible information and communication technology (ICT) that includes universal design features. A representative from the White House, Secretaries of Labor, Education, and Commerce along with CEOs from business associations and organizations and CEOs from individual businesses that have adopted successful practices should be invited to a Summit. The Summit should produce an action plan for expanding and improving the design and procurement of accessible ICT by the masses of businesses so that profits and productivity are enhanced.

2. **Support Business Organizations and Associations.**

   - **Generic business organizations.** Support initiatives and projects by generic business groups e.g., Chambers of Commerce, National Restaurant Association, SHRM, and Rotary Clubs that want to be involved in reaching the masses of businesses about hiring persons with disabilities and others through accessible technology.

   - **Disability-focused business organizations.** Support initiatives and projects by business groups, associations, and organizations whose missions are to expand and improve the capacity and commitment of individual businesses to hire persons with disabilities and others through accessible technology.

3. **Support Peer Technical Assistance.**

   Support technical assistance directed exclusively at businesses and employers that provides information that is clear, simple, accurate and usable via a **single portal** for obtaining information and technical assistance and support. Technical assistance could include:

   - Sample policies,
   - Best and promising practices,
   - Demonstration sites to test out alternatives,

- Practical alternatives and solutions,
- Products and services for companies to test before purchase, and
- Sources of funding.

4. Support Employers' Speakers' Bureaus.

Support employer speakers' bureaus to speak at local meetings of business organizations and at meetings of state and national business and industry associations. Speakers should include business leaders and managers who understand the investment benefits of hiring persons with disabilities and the positive impact of procuring and producing accessible technologies.

5. Support the Establishment of a Network of Disability Specialists and Managers and a Network of Workers with Disabilities Using Accessible Technology.

Support the establishment of a network for internal corporate disability specialists and managers to learn from each other about strategies for expanding and improving policies, practices, and infrastructures that enhance the employment of persons with disabilities through accessible technology. Also support establishment of network of workers with disabilities using accessible technology (e.g., Facebook, Google Groups, and LinkedIn).

6. Support Efforts to Educate/Empower Youth

a) Educate and thereby empower youth with disabilities about accessible technology so that they can educate businesses about its benefits when they apply for a job and after they are hired.

b) Include universal design concepts in high school technology-related courses.

c) Establish and support programs that enable persons with disabilities to take their assistive technology devices from place-to-place.

7. Allow for Development of Employment Plans by Public Agencies.

State vocational rehabilitation agencies, One-Stop Career Centers and other federal, state, and local governmental agencies should facilitate the development of employment plans for applicants and employees with disabilities, including those who become injured or acquire disabilities on the job. The employment plans should identify how accessible technology can enable these individuals to successfully perform job functions.

8. **Expand Role of Higher Education.**

   The next generation of graduates of institutions of higher education should be fully cognizant of the concepts and applications of accessible technology and universal design. Curricula should be modified to address these concepts. At a minimum, these concepts should be taught to:

   - Business school students,
   - Engineers and technologists,
   - Marketing professionals,
   - Web designers,
   - Architects, and
   - Rehabilitation counselors and other educators.

   In addition, scholarships and apprenticeships for students wanting to learn about accessible technology should be readily available.

   Students with disabilities should be encouraged to enter fields such as engineering, education, and business.

9. **Support Initiatives for Entrepreneurs, Especially Entrepreneurs with Disabilities.**

   Provide financial assistance to entrepreneurs wanting to focus on accessible technologies and universal design.

10. **Enhance the Role of Business in Advising Government Agencies and Government-Supported Organizations by Establishing Business Advisory Councils.**

    Establish formal mechanisms such as the establishment of Business Advisory Councils for the business community to provide advice to federal agencies e.g., Social Security Administration, Departments of Labor, Education, and Commerce on how to improve participation by businesses in existing programs and how to make existing programs more responsive to needs of business e.g., Ticket to Work program, vocational rehabilitation program, disability-business technical assistance centers, and state Assistive Technology Projects.

11. **Enter into Additional Strategic Alliances.**

    Federal agencies should enter into strategic alliances with additional business organizations and associations.

12. **Research and Modify Employer Incentives and Supports, including Tax Incentives.**

   a) Research whether and, if not, why **existing tax and other incentives** e.g., outcome and outcome milestone payments under the Ticket to Work program are not being used by businesses to the extent anticipated and propose policy alternatives and options.

   b) Research **alternative tax incentives** that encourage adoption of policies and practices that facilitate the hiring, retention, and advancement of persons with disabilities, including reduced FICA taxes for companies that implement successful disability management and prevention programs.

   c) Establish and support programs that allow businesses to **rent and/or borrow** assistive technology devices for persons with disabilities participating in short-term **internship programs**. Include dialogue with assistive technology vendors to support such programs.

   d) Provide financial assistance to individual and/or small business to help **defray costs of assistive technology**. Keep paperwork and other administrative burdens to an absolute minimum.

13. **Adopt Investment Tax Credit Policy.**

   Adopt investment tax credit policy to encourage entrepreneurs to make investments in products and services that will create new industries that address specific needs of individuals with disabilities and ancillary "ease of use" markets e.g., elderly persons experiencing functional limitations. Possible areas of investment include new technologies designed to enhance independent living and new market orientation of existing products and services.

14. **Eliminate Work Disincentives in the SSI and SSDI Programs**

   Federal policies must make work pay for SSI and SSDI beneficiaries and they must eliminate work disincentives that force beneficiaries not to risk working or to increase their level of work for fear of losing essential cash benefits and health care.

15. **Implement Existing Disability-Related Laws.**

   Strengthen enforcement of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act so vendors know that they must design ICT that meet accessibility standards. To the extent vendors do not perceive that the government is serious about

implementation of Section 508, they will put their accessibility development programs on hold. Expand Section 508 so it applies to entities receiving federal financial assistance.

16. **Expand Research Initiatives.**

   a) Expand support for targeted research that produces **data that can be used by businesses to help document business case** i.e., businesses need more and better data.

   b) Conduct research from the business perspective of large, medium and small businesses regarding the extent to which **existing programs and projects providing technical assistance and dissemination of information and training** are being used and if not used to the extent considered appropriate, identify reasons why and strategies for improving utility.

   c) Conduct research identifying better ways for businesses to **identify applicants and employees with disabilities**.

   d) Support research that facilitates **innovations that are of commercial use** by promoting partnerships between business and university researchers, including for example research that provides necessary data to conduct case study and scenario planning.

   e) Work with National Science Foundation and Department of Commerce to support initiatives regarding the use and availability of accessible technology in the workplace by persons with disabilities.

17. **Expand Awards and Recognition Programs.**

   Awards and recognition programs make a difference; they help differentiate a business from its competitors. Programs providing awards and recognition for businesses enhancing opportunities (including employment) for persons with disabilities through accessible technology should be expanded. To the extent possible and appropriate, provide relief from administrative reporting and other requirements for those receiving awards or recognition.

18. **Coordinate Government Initiatives**

   Coordinate government initiatives in order to better leverage multiple sources of funding and provide clear, simple, and consistent policy interpretations.

19. **Enter into Partnerships with Foundations.**

Reach out to foundations to support targeted initiatives related to the adoption of policies and practices that reflect the principles of accessible technology.

APPENDIX 1

BUSINESS DIALOGUE ON
ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY AND DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT
ORLANDO, FLORIDA

September 24, 2007

Business Participants

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